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FAKE RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN FRANCE: SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Description

German efforts to organize a fifth column in resistance; "resistance movements" launched by eleventh hour converts to the Allied cause; plans of Vichy politicians to remain in power after the liberation of France by staging a palace revolution against the Vichy regime; false reports of "resistance movements" emanating from Vichy via Switzerland in order to mislead French and Allied opinion.

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FAKE RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN FRANCE: SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Summary

1. The Germans are trying to organize fake resistance movements in order to disrupt the genuine resistance, and in order to leave behind them in France an anti-Allied fifth column.

2. Frenchmen, with records of collaboration or of attentisme, are engaged in manufacturing evidence to convince French and Allied opinion that they have been integral parts of resistance.

3. Vichy politicians have been exploring the possibilities of themselves staging an overthrowal of the Vichy regime, in order to prevent the genuine resistance from acquiring power, and with the hope of making themselves thereby acceptable to the Allies.

4. Vichy agents have arranged for a build-up in the Swiss press of non-existent "resistance movements," in order to blacken the character of French resistance, and to facilitate the manoeuvers of fake resistance movements.

I. INTRODUCTION

French resistance is now recognized as a political factor of first-rate importance by the French Committee, by Vichy, by the Allies, and by the Germans. Its right to play a large role in the reconstruction of French political life is recognized by the French Committee and the Allies. For some time to come, French resistance will be a political force, and the present membership in it confers a promise of future political power.

As a nucleus of political power, French resistance has been the target of intrigues directed by groups outside it -- groups which are not and have never been primarily interested in resistance, and often are fundamentally hostile to it.

The motives and methods of these intrigues are various. The Germans and collaborationist Frenchmen have sought to organize a fifth column inside resistance. Other Frenchmen, either collaborationist or attentiste, have represented themselves as integral parts of resistance, or have been busy manufacturing evidence in support of such a claim to be presented to France and the Allies after liberation. Attempts have been made by special interest groups with doubtful political records to purchase the support of individual resistance groups, and to misrepresent the character of French resistance by advertizing the views of "resistance groups" which exist only on paper.

The nature of clandestine organization often makes it difficult to recognize fake resistance movements for what they are, particularly for non-French observers. Indeed, it is apparent that some of these forgeries are designed to confuse the Allies rather than France, in the hope of finding and exploiting differences of opinion between the Allies and the genuine French resistance, or between the Allies and the French Committee of National Liberation.

II. THE GERMAN FIFTH COLUMN

The Germans, especially through the Gestapo, have set up a special organization to counteract resistance movements in France. It was

estimated in February 1943 that the Germans had launched as many as 30 fake resistance movements in France.[1] Operating with French agents, recruited from the ranks of the collaborationist organizations, the Gestapo has attempted to set up nuclei of "resistance" in the name of both de Gaulle and Giraud; these nuclei are instructed to link themselves with genuine resistance groups.[2] The Germans distribute faked copies of French clandestine papers, which at first sight appear anti-German and anti-Vichy, but which contain cleverly chosen attacks against Algiers.[3] Some acts of sabotage, in which the destruction of French lives is heavy and the damage to the German war-effort light, as well as some assassinations, such as that of the Radical-Socialist leader Maurice Sarraut, are committed by such organizations as the Milice in order to discredit resistance.[4]

In addition to these efforts to counteract the immediate contribution of French resistance to the war against Germany, the Germans have a longer range policy directed towards leaving behind them in France a fifth column similar to the one which functioned so effectively on their behalf before the present war. It is reported that Doriot's Parti Populaire Francais, the Légion des Volontaires Francais contre le Bolshevisme, the Breton National Party, and the Milice are supplying the Gestapo with agents preparing for a post-war role of treason.[5] The Milice has been directed to prepare to work underground and to form a "Secret Army" recruited from men who will not be included in the Milice or in any official organization. Old secret organizations such as the

1. Radio Patrie, 25 February 1943.
2. CID #47221C, 6 October 1943.
3. OSS source A #16675b, 8 December 1943.
4. OSS source A #16749a, 10 December 1943.
5. CID #50477, 27 November 1943.
6. CID #56491, 21 January 1944.

Cagoulards, are being reorganized, and new ones formed.[1] It is obvious that the claim to have belonged to resistance would provide the best camouflage for a German fifth column.

III. ELEVENTH-HOUR CONVERSIONS

Another source of possible confusion results from the overtures which various officials, personalities, and interests, more or less closely identified with collaborationism, have made to resistance. The situation has many complexities, in view of the fact that the genuine French resistance has infiltrated into circles identified with collaborationism, and has conducted a vigorous psychological warfare to neutralize and even to win over elements who officially must carry out the Vichy program. Hence it is difficult to see, if an individual's record is disputed, how the question can be decided except on the basis of witnesses from the genuine resistance. It is clear, however, that elements who had no wish to ally themselves with the genuine resistance, will attempt to persuade the world that such was in fact the case, even to the extent of manufacturing a "resistance group" with which they were in contact. Thus a report which tells of the formation of new so-called resistance committees in France says that French collaborationists, even the most extreme ones, now realizing that German collapse is only a matter of time, are hoping to confuse the record of their collaboration by an eleventh-hour conversion, and are making as much noise about their activities as they dare, without attracting too much attention from the Gestapo.[2] The name of de Monzie has been often mentioned in connec-

1. Tribune de Geneve, 9 January 1944; OSS New York memorandum La Cagoule.
2. OSS source A - 18459a, 6 January 1944.

tion with one of these movements, also the names of Paul Faure, Charles Spinasse, Albert Sarraut, and Georges Bonnet. Implicated in reports on these "resistance" movements are representatives of certain financial interests, which, in the view of the genuine resistance, are deeply compromised with collaboration. The Comité des Forges, de Wendel, Lambert-Ribot, and Peyerimoff de Montenolle, are named. These financial interests, in addition to promoting fake resistance movements, are reported as having made overtures to individual Maquis groups of the real resistance with offers of money, cigarettes etc., and also to have attempted to approach the Allies. An informant who reported that these efforts were demoralizing Maquis groups in South-Western France gave it as his opinion that if the leaders of genuine resistance were to meet the situation, they had to be recognized and supported.[1]

IV. A PALACE REVOLUTION

Another source of possible confusion is focussed in the project of summoning the French National Assembly, that is to say, the old Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Commissioner for the Interior in the French Committee, d'Astier de la Vigerie, has recently stated that in case of an Allied landing, Marshal Pétain plans to call a National Assembly, including the communist deputies, to liberate all political prisoners, again including the communists, and to establish a republican regime over which he would preside in person, and which would include such personalities as Georges Bonnet and Anatole de Monzie. He stated that certain members of the Vichy government, certain high functionaries, and even leaders of the Milice and Parti Populaire Français, had gone to Switzerland to make their views known: they

1. OSS #27500, 7 January 1944; Bern Wire #564, 28 January 1944; New York Herald Tribune, 12 December 1943; France (London), 7 December 1943; L'Humanité #243, 1 September 1943.

claimed to be very favorable to Gaullisme.[1] A plan to summon the National Assembly has been mentioned in a number of earlier reports, in which, apart from the names given above, are to be found those of Paul Faure, Albert Chichery, Montigny, and Louis Rollin.[2] Apparently a number of discredited French politicians have the idea that they could save their political futures by putting themselves at the head of a "revolt" against the Vichy regime which might be led by the Vichy Chief of State himself, and which would be delayed until, in relation to the Allied invasion, a policy of revolt had become also a policy of prudent self-interest. Such plans for wresting the achievement of overthrowing the Vichy regime from the genuine resistance are based on the idea, it is said, that the Allies are distrustful of the political tendencies of the genuine resistance and would be favorably disposed to the intervention of a group which presented itself as more conservative. One report speaks of a plan, supported by those who feel themselves menaced by a purge of collaborationists, to launch a "broadened resistance in a new form, quasi-legal and anti-Communist", which will attempt to recruit the old parliamentarians. The report indicates that the promoters of the scheme imagine that the plan is favorably received by "certain Americans."[3] It may therefore be inferred that attempts will be made to stage "revolts," with the complicity of Vichy officials, against the Vichy regime, and then persuade Allied authorities that the junta so established is the expression of the true French resistance.

1. Echo d'Alger, 7 March 1944.
2. Christian Science Monitor, 3 September 1943, Pour la Victoire, 11 September and 4 December 1943; OSS #22118, 8 September 1943; OWI Cable, 4 September 1943.
3. OSS source A #23524, March 1944.

if any group disputed their claim, it would be dismissed as "Communist."

V. THE "SUPREME COUNCIL OF RESISTANCE"

A notable example of the manner in which fake resistance movements are launched with the purpose of confusing Allied opinion is the history of the "Supreme Council of Resistance." The Swiss press in December 1943 carried very lengthy reports of a "Congress held somewhere in France" attended by delegates from all the areas where the guerrillas were most active. According to these reports, the Congress expressed disapproval of the policies of the French Committee, but asserted their complete faith in de Gaulle himself. Attacks were made on exiled politicians who had secured high positions in Algiers. The Maquis, it was said, has reason to fear the meddling of Algiers when the moment comes to determine the new constitution and government of France. Accordingly, the congress elected a "Supreme Council" of five members to coordinate guerrilla operations and to maintain liaison with British and American circles. This Council, it was said, will at the appropriate moment drop its anonymity and will assert itself as the provisional government of France.

Further articles in the Swiss press developed the theme that French resistance is split. The relation between the National Council of Resistance, with which all significant sections of the genuine French resistance are affiliated, and the "Supreme Council of Resistance" was compared with the relation between Mihailovitch and Tito. The "Supreme Council" was said to represent the younger, the more active elements, to be anti-capitalist, to reject all support from foreign capitalist powers, etc. Other embroidery of specious "facts" followed. An "In-

ternational" congress of leftist resistance groups, with delegates from Tito, was reported. The followers of the "Supreme Council" were reported to be "unorthodox Communists" opposed to the "orthodox Communists" led by Marty and affiliated with the National Council of Resistance.[1]

A further aspect of the "Supreme Council" campaign was the use made of a French clandestine paper, Bir Hakeim, whose editor was bought by Vichy agents. Bir Hakeim then began to publish blood-curdling blacklists, to attack the Algiers Committee, to attack American policy with regard to France in unbridled language, and to support the "Communists" and the "Supreme Council of Resistance."[2]

French, British, and American sources agree that the "Supreme Council" is a fake launched by politicians close to Vichy. The names of Dumoulin de la Barthete (one-time chef de cabinet to Pétain, who wrote to Pétain saying he was going to follow Giraud), René Gilloin, Bonnet, and de Monzie and mentioned in connection with it.[3] These details on the "Supreme Council" are given to illustrate the initial plausibility which can be given to a fake resistance movement, and the bewildering confusion which it can cause.

How successful such efforts to confuse foreign observers may be, can be judged by the following press report, obviously inspired by the "Supreme Council" propaganda, which was sent from Switzerland and published in the New York Times:

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1. France (London), 1 and 3 January 1944; Gazette de Lausanne, 1 January 1944; Der Bund (Bern), 22 February 1944; Nouveaux Temps, 6 January 1944.
2. R & A #1121.51, Situation Report, WESTERN EUROPE, 18 March 1944.
3. OSS #27500, 7 January 1944; Bern wire #564, 28 January 1944.

> Conditions inside France are becoming more chaotic than ever..., with considerable discord prevailing on the issue of Communist participation in the post-war government. One group recently gave tacit approval to Communist participation in the FCNL; a second group opposed the Algiers Committe's policies and set up a commission of five to become a provisional government later, and a third faction openly opposed the Communists.[1]

This report is noteworthy because it is clear, as in the other cases given earlier, that it was directed in part, and perhaps primarily, toward the Allies, to convince them that genuine French resistance was split, was largely Communist, and did not, as the French Committee claims, support the French Committee. If, by such false reports, the conviction is spread that the situation in France is chaotic, the manoeuvers of all the promoters of fake resistance movements are made easier.

1. New York Times (Bern), 3 January 1944.